

# **The Impact of Online Travel Agent Reviews and Stay Decisions on 4-Star Hotel Occupancy Rates in Batam City**

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## **Abstract**

Mobility Online applications can make it easier for users to access various information and recommendations related to hospitality, making it easier to book and review hotel reviews. Online travel agent is an application that is designed like a forum and involves users in reviewing and spreading the products offered. Online travel agent reviews have several aspects that are assessed such as location, facilities and assessment of staff services whether they meet guest expectations or not. Meeting guest expectations has the opportunity for repeat purchases and guest loyalty to the hotel. This aspect will be taken into consideration for the development of the hotel so that it can continue to compete. The problem in this study is how the impact of Online Travel Agent and stay decision making has a relationship with the number of occupancy rates at the hotel. The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of reviews on online travel agents and stay decisions related to increasing room occupancy at the hotel. Descriptive qualitative research method with a case study approach, using data collection techniques; observation, interviews and literature study. The results of the study that Online Travel Agent Reviews have a relationship as a guest review material when deciding to stay, positive reviews increase the number of occupancies at the hotel. This research is expected to provide recommendations for further researchers, research conducted using qualitative research methods in depth interviews and case studies so that the results can reveal the impact of online travel agent reviews on the number of occupancy and stay decisions at the hotel.

**Keywords:** Online Reviews, Staying Decision, Hotel Occupancy Rate

## **Introduction**

Technological advances have a lot of impact on daily life, many things can be accessed only using cell phones. In hospitality operations, technology is very useful for business continuity

and service to hotel guests. Starting from hotel data software to applications that are considered to help increase sales of hotel products. Technological advances present applications that can make it easier for users to access various information and recommendations related to hospitality. One of the technological advances that serves to assist the work of marketing and receptionists in the hospitality front office is the emergence of online booking applications or what is known as (OTA). Marketing through online travel agents is a type of business to consumer (B2C) business sales and booking directly on the internet so that guests can learn in advance the products to be purchased through publications. According to Hendriyati (2019) *online travel agent* is an application that is a medium that helps hotels to sell their products. OTA applications are widely used by local and foreign tourists if they want to visit a country. The OTA application is considered a marketing agent that not only markets hotel products but also markets flight tickets.

Since the existence of the OTA application, room reservations can be made by telephone, walk-in, and through the OTA application. Booking hotel rooms that are usually done directly (*walk-in*), using telephone and *fax* is considered less practical, especially if the user is outside the location of the hotel to be addressed. The presence of online reservation applications now makes users switch to booking rooms through OTAs (Putro, 2022). If guests have never visited the hotel area, it will be difficult for users to consider whether the hotel is good or not. The OTA application contains hotel products with details of facilities and there is a *review* feature in the form of a page to provide reviews or complaints while staying at the hotel. The characteristic of using online booking applications is the speed of information and data uploads that can be done in real time and continuously. So that events that occur can be directly uploaded as reviews in seconds (Saragih, 2019). Usually, guests will choose a hotel that has the best reviews so that they feel guaranteed with the stay they will get.

Hotels are divided into several classes according to their classification in order to meet the needs and satisfaction of guests. Hotel types are determined based on location, hotel building form, service level, hotel theme, length of stay, and target market. PuPurwaningrum et al. (2021). Before users decide on the location of the hotel to choose, tourists or guests will consider which hotels meet their needs such as choosing a location, or facilities. The existence of online reviews is very useful and helps guests determine the choice of hotel to stay at, and further convinces guests in making stay decisions. Now many potential guests make reservations online because they can directly select the desired room, guaranteed payment methods, and get a booking code as a guarantee of booking (Alhamdi, 2023). On the other hand, there are still those who do not understand the use of the functions of the features on the OTA page, especially the senior age group. Based on the description above, the problem is first how guest reviews on online travel agents have a link in the decision-making process of staying overnight. Second, can guest reviews on OTAs increase the number of hotel occupancy rates? Third, what aspects are assessed when providing guest reviews at online travel agents. The objectives of this study are first to find out guest reviews on OTAs have a relationship with decision making to stay at a hotel. Second, guest reviews on OTAs can increase the number of occupancy rates, third, the aspects that are assessed when giving OTA reviews.

From several previous studies, it is said that OTA is one of the *e-commerce website* applications designed to display service quality based on honesty. Service quality has the

biggest impact in influencing consumer repurchase intentions. According to Wilson et al. (2019) online review page user involvement can help disseminate service products by creating forum communities. The function of the forum community is to express the experience gained during the stay. This affects the development process and other prospects. Research Majeed et al. (2022) building strong and permanent customer relationships is important for the market to be successful. Guests will feel satisfied if their expectations are met. Services from a company that are in accordance with expectations, the influence of facilities and services (Husen, 2020).

Competition in Online Travel Agent encourages companies to create consumer satisfaction and loyalty that compares between perceived product performance and expectations (Aranda & Ginting, 2023). From the four previous studies, it can be concluded that the difference is that the first discusses Travel Agent Reviews is a website that displays service quality, the second Online Reviews is a service satisfaction forum, the third guest expectations on service and quality, the fourth consumer loyalty that compares performance and expectations. The research to be carried out is that online travel agent reviews have a link to overnight decision making and have an impact on increasing the number of hotel occupancy.

## **Literature Review**

### *Online Travel Agent Review*

*Online Travel Agent* or OTA is an application or website-based hotel room booking media. The presence of OTA helps guests to choose the accommodation to go to. Guests can monitor the quality of a hotel, in terms of prices and offers provided through the application. OTA is one of the options used by guests before choosing the hotel to go to. At the time of hotel selection, there are several aspects that are considered before deciding on a choice. One of the most influential aspects is the online customer review or rating listed on the OTA page. The comments listed are comments made by previous guests who have stayed at the hotel so that the comments listed are used as determinants in making decisions on staying at the hotel (Sofiani, 2022). The presence of the review feature is one way to ensure or anticipate the facilities and services expected by tourists when staying at the hotel. Guests who book rooms through OTAs have full access to provide reviews of the selected hotel according to their experience during their stay. This means that they can convey both positive and negative experiences as testimonials (Kadir, 2020).

### *Guest Reviews and Decisions*

The online travel agent application features a page for uploading reviews about a hotel which is usually based on the guest's stay experience and expectations. Guest assessment is the result of a combined assessment of the benefits, attributes and prices of a service provider (Haq, 2023). A good assessment will result from the experience or consumption obtained from a hotel. Customer satisfaction is the sum of perceptions, evaluations and psychological reactions of customers to products or services. Majeed et al. (2022). New reviews are more valuable than old reviews because they provide a more accurate picture of the latest experience at the hotel (Sarudin, 2021). Guests tend to read the latest reviews because they are considered more valid and describe the current situation. There are several aspects that become aspects of assessment in a hotel, such as: building conditions, facilities and room conditions. The services provided by the staff, strategic location, cleanliness,

comfort during your stay, menu and taste of hotel cuisine. This is an aspect that is assessed by guests. Guests must feel comfortable in many ways, such as feeling safe being served by employees well, having reliable competence, or feeling safe when using hotel facilities (Hariyanto & Rukmandiana, 2022). Reviews on *online travel agents* provide assessment details such as food, room, and service so that review readers can feel more about the real thing at the hotel. If a guest is satisfied with the hospitality provided by a hotel, it can foster a sense of loyalty to a hotel. Online reviews are the number of comments or feedback from a reviewer about a product or service in detail (Nuruddin, 2023). Online review also means an interactive message given by guests in order to tell the experience they get so that others can make it a consideration before choosing to stay at an accommodation. Online reviews are one of the triggers for guest decision making because guests read information and evaluate whether the brand (hotel) is good or not which then leads to a purchase decision (Suniarti & Menuh, 2019). The aspects that guests assess when giving an assessment are (1) service quality: friendliness and informative and helpful staff, (2) cleanliness of rooms and public facilities, (3) availability of hotel facilities, (4) strategic location of the hotel, (5) variety of breakfast and taste of dishes. Service quality is like a powerful weapon and the superiority of service companies, location has an influence on purchasing decisions, the more strategic the location, the higher the chance of purchasing decisions (Hastoko & Stevany, 2022). Facilities are a facility that is used and needed to provide comfort in activities, infrastructure and support for service user activities (Samsudin et al., 2023).

#### *Hotel Occupancy Rate*

Hotel occupancy rate is the number of rooms sold from the total number of rooms. Hotel occupancy rates are often the subject of comparison between one hotel and another, the high occupancy of hotel rooms will directly affect the income and profits of the hotel (Jatmiko & Sandy, 2020). The number of occupancy levels is considered like competition to bring in as many guests as possible, so a brilliant strategy is needed in order to increase the occupancy of each hotel (Satiti et al., 2021). Online travel agent reviews are one of the strategies to increase the number of occupancies in hotels, the more reviews or good feedback guests give to the hotel, the better the hotel will be. OTA has an effect on the occupancy rate in hotels. If a hotel is able to create guest satisfaction, it will create a good relationship and create guest loyalty (Husen, 2020). A good guest review is like an invitation to try the same experience at the hotel. Satisfied customers will make repeat visits in the future and tell others about the expected services (Marlinja, 2020). This makes many guests eventually interested and visit the hotel. Obtaining new visitors is considered more expensive than maintaining existing visitors, because guest loyalty is very important in today's era of high hotel business competition, because loyalty will be beneficial for the long-term development of a company (Hamzah, 2019). This is one of the reasons maintaining existing visitors is very important, to retain existing visitors can be done by giving them satisfaction such as fulfilling guest expectations during their stay (Hariyanto & Dewi, 2023).

#### **Research Methodology**

This research was conducted in October & November 2023 in Batam City, Riau Islands. This research uses qualitative methods, primary data sources are obtained through researcher interviews with sources directly related to the topic. The research uses a case study approach on the grounds that this research is to describe the impact of online travel agent guest reviews, whether reviews have an effect on stay decision making, and find out the aspects

that are assessed when giving reviews. Interviews were conducted with the aim of obtaining answers in detail to the problems studied and at the same time knowing the impact of online travel agent reviews in making stay decisions that have an impact on the number of occupancy rates of 4-star hotels in Batam City. Data collection techniques were carried out by means of observation, dept interview (in-depth interview) and literature study.

This research population consists of 3 (three) people, namely a Front Office Manager (FOM) as a key informant, and 2 (two) reception people on duty from one of the 4-star hotels (\*\*\*\*) in Batam City. Reception has an attachment with guests because front office reception has an active role in dealing with guests to increase room sales (Pratama & Arsyad, 2018). To get accurate data about what guests expect during their stay at a 4-star hotel (\*\*\*\*), guest reviews from OTAs that have collaborated with the hotel are used. OTA guest reviews are 120 reviews that enter on weekend days starting from Friday, Saturday, and Sunday a total of 120. 120 reviews as a population of reviews during the weekend. According to Arikunto (2010) if the population is less than 100 people then the sample size is taken as a whole, but if the population is more than 100 then 10 - 15% or 20 - 25% of the population can be taken. Respondent reviews  $25/100 \times 120 = 30$ , so the total sample of the following research is 30 respondent reviews. Completing and categorizing the sample used tabulation with tabular categories of analysis of the role of online travel agent guest reviews in making stay decisions. Tabulation is data in the form of a table, it can be an ordinary table arranged by the nature of the respondent in the observation or an analysis table that contains the results of analyzing the information being studied (Kawatak et al., 2023). Information from FOM and receptionists is used to validate the relationship between guest desires and expectations with services, facilities and physical, non- physical facilities of standard 4-star hotels (\*\*\*\*) in Batam City as a decision to stay. Front office plays a role in providing services to guests, one of the service qualities is the reliability of providing the promised service promptly, accurately, and satisfactorily (Rosalina & Silitonga, 2018). Service quality and guest satisfaction will determine the guest's stay decision at the hotel.

Table 1  
*Demographic Profile of Respondents*

| Factors       |         | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------|---------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender        | Male    | 119           | 39.7           |
|               | Female  | 181           | 60.3           |
| Age           | 19 - 20 | 119           | 39.7           |
|               | 21 - 22 | 113           | 37.7           |
|               | 23 - 24 | 56            | 18.7           |
|               | 25 - 26 | 12            | 4.0            |
|               | Year 1  | 148           | 49.3           |
| Year of Study | Year 2  | 59            | 19.7           |
|               | Year 3  | 39            | 13.0           |
|               | Year 4  | 54            | 18.0           |

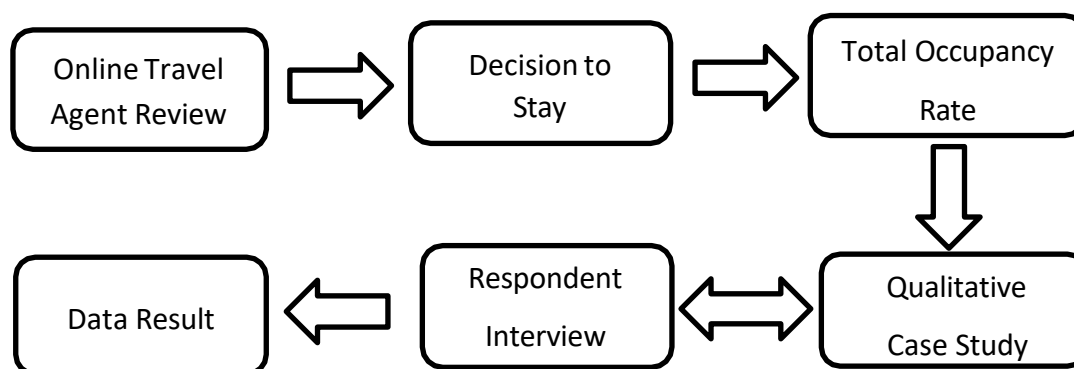
**A Proposed Conceptual Model/Framework**

Figure 1. The Proposed Conceptual Model/Framework

Online travel agent guest reviews play a role in the success of product and service sales, when guests have booking intentions, they will use online reviews to review the comments listed in the online travel agent. Andono and Ihza Maulana (2022). Purchase intention is the activity of getting and using a product, including the decision-making process that determines these activities. Guests tend to buy products as measured by the level of likelihood of purchase which is driven by other motivations (Angkiriwang et al., 2018).

When guests are about to decide to stay, they will read the opinions and comments of previous guests to convince them to choose the hotel. New reviews help build confidence as they give an idea of the consistency of the property or hotel. Properties or hotels that have positive reviews rank higher (Sarudin, 2021). Online travel agents have an impact on the number of occupancy rates. Guests can provide opinions about the places they visit. The results of guest perceptions regarding service, hotel location, and facilities will provide a stimulus for guests to come (Kadir, 2020). This impact affects the number of occupancy rates at the hotel. This research was conducted using a qualitative method with a case study approach. Case studies are activities that are carried out intensively and in depth about an event to gain in-depth knowledge about the event. The target in case studies is actual or real life, not something that happened in the past (Hidayat, 2019). The data collection technique also uses in-depth interviews with FOM and two receptions. Interviews not only aim to dig up data but also reveal the meaning contained in the research (Djaelani, 2013).

**Results and Discussions****4-Star Hotel Overview (\*\*\*\*)**

One of the 4-star hotels that became the object of research has 130 rooms with superior, deluxe, super deluxe, and suite room types. The hotel has several facilities such as semi-outdoor swimming pool, 24-hour front desk agent, restaurant, meeting room, restaurant and bar. The hotel also provides in-to-room massage, and shuttle service to several malls in Batam. Facilities are the provision of equipment to facilitate guest activities or perform their needs during their stay at a hotel (Wahyuni, 2016). Each room has facilities such as TV, minibar, toiletries such as hairdryer and shaver. Suite rooms have facilities such as a bathtub and mini kitchen that can be accessed by guests during their stay. Services during the stay at the hotel are free delivery to several malls in Batam, telephone operator services and receptionist available 24 hours. Accommodation services must have competence and guest

service skills are important. Human resource development is a strategic step contained in the business plan (Riyanti & Edison, 2016). In addition, receptionists can also serve guest requests in the form of additional room decoration, room cleaning services and services that guests need during their stay.

#### *Guest Reviews in Staying Decisions*

Online Travel Agent (OTA) reviews are one of the triggers for guests to make a stay decision. Positive comments on the OTA page provide an increase in purchase interest and viceVersa (Fathin & Millanyani, 2021). Positive reviews are of course generated from the services provided during the guest's stay. If the quality of service received by guests is good, guests have the intention to try again or repurchase. However, if the service received is lacking, guests will be disappointed and tend not to return again (Feri, 2018). Good service quality supported by good reviews can be an attraction for guests to the hotel. Exploratory interest is an interest that describes a person seeking information about a product and supports the positive properties of the product (Santos, 2020). The more guests read good or positive reviews about the hotel; the more guests are interested in staying at the hotel.

#### *Guest Reviews Can Increase the Number of Hotel Occupancy Rates*

Based on a survey of 30 respondent reviews on online travel agents shows that around 66.7% of guests read OTA reviews before making a reservation. Customers use online media with the aim of sharing their own experience of a product that has been experienced. Consumers or guests also utilize other people's experiences when deciding to make a purchase (Suarsa, 2020). A total of 66.7% of respondents said they made reservations through the OTA page. This proves that most guests make reservations through OTAs and read guest reviews as a trigger for purchasing decisions, this purchase decision will affect the number of hotel occupancy rates that have collaborated with OTAs.

#### **Conclusions**

Online travel agent reviews play a role in the sustainability of hotel occupancy, the existence of OTA reviews supports marketing products more broadly. Guest reviews can provide an overview of the conditions, and service satisfaction obtained by guests while staying at the hotel. The more positive reviews given, the more new guests will influence to decide to stay at the hotel. This OTA review is a reference for making developments for the hotel starting from service, facilities, and hotel cleanliness. Recommendations for further research can use quantitative research methods with independent variables with indicators that have not been revealed and dependent variables to further expand the range of research.

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